

E v e n t i d e

by Magespark

Category: Brave, 2012, How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Adventure, Fantasy

Language: English

Characters: Astrid, Merida

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2012-12-16 22:45:26

Updated: 2013-02-06 01:11:22

Packaged: 2016-04-26 14:12:37

Rating: T

Chapters: 6

Words: 8,751

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: When DunBroch is assailed, the kingdom is sent into disarray. It seems the invaders are misunderstood in their intentions; but none of the natives can communicate with them. In a newly chaotic land, Merida meets with the Vikings in an attempt to teach them the language of the Kingdom. Using her cunning and intellect, she hopes to prevent war and forge alliance - but can she do it?

1. Prologue: When At Midnight

****Prologue****

>When at Midnight, the Monsters Come Out to Play

Merida turned over in her bed to face a beam of light shining through the window, onto her. Her sword, leaning against the bedstead, reflected the moonlight and illuminated the entire room because of it. The awe-inspiring tapestry of mother and daughter still hung on the wall next to her fireplace; she turned to look at it. But as well as reminding her of the journey that she and her mother had made together, it also reminded her of how she behaved before it had been made. Selfish, rash, stubborn - she'd taken those words straight from her mother's mouth. She didn't want to think about that Merida, she just wanted to sleep now. It surely wasn't too much to ask, besides, it was still dark outside. After a few minutes of silence, though, thunder sounded in the distance. Angus, the Princess' sturdy horse, whinnied outside in fear.

"Angus!" She shouted at him in response, turning her body away from the window. Her voice then shifted into a whisper, "Shut it, ya wee baby." She was half tempted to get up solely for the purpose of throwing a bucket of water on him if he didn't stop whining - he didn't. Sighing heavily, Merida tore the bed covers away from her, the cold hitting her like a sword to the face. She shielded herself for a few seconds, then stood, exhausted from the lack of sleep.

"I'll be beltin' ya if no other doesnae do it." She moaned under her breath while pulling on a plainly coloured, simple garb and black, comfortable shoes. Then, moved towards the heavy wooden door to the hallway, grasping her bow and quiver from the lid of the chest kept at the end of her bed while she passed it. The last thing she made a note to take with her was the hooded cloak she usually wore when she ventured out from the castle and into the wilderness. Passing through the kitchen, he picked up two apples and placed one into her mouth. Maudie was asleep in a chair, with her head on her arms against the table. It was obvious she'd fallen into slumber while getting breakfast ready, so there was less to do in the morning. Merida chuckled and unlocked the door as silently as she could - opening it, however, was a different matter. Due to the wind, it swung open violently, turned one hundred and eighty degrees to smash against the castle's stone walls. She winced, but was fortunate it hadn't woken the kitchen maid; she'd only scream if it had. Finally out of the restrictions of her home, Merida finished off the apple and gave the other to Angus when she reached him.

"Easy lad; there's nay monster, it's tha wind, ya cuddie." She patted his neck tenderly while he ate his treat, the wind ripping through his mane wildly to irritate her cheeks. She secured her weapons and mounted the beast, urging him into a trot until the portcullis stood in front of her. One of the guards called to her from above.

"Who goes thar?" He cried to her. Merida knew that he was doing his job - but it was pointless sounding so aggressive when she was already within the castle walls, so therefore not a threat.

"Jus' open the gate before I run ya through!" She retaliated, equally as aggressive. The guard apologised upon recognising the voice, then rushed to let her through. It didn't seem to dawn on him that it was the middle of the night, and he probably shouldn't be letting anybody out, never mind the Princess. But it was his mistake, and she wasn't about to stop for him. Goading Angus forward, she charged from the keep and onto the stone bridge, trepidation emerging in the corner of her mind. If her mother found out about this - and she probably would - there could be disastrous consequences. The thunder rumbled once more. Louder this time, but upon looking up, Merida noticed that the sky was crystal clear. Nor clouds, or rain in sight on the horizon.

"Wha's up with that?" She pondered aloud, still urging her horse into a faster pace. She pulled her bow up from over her shoulder and wielded it, nocking an arrow into place, but keeping the weapon leant against her leg. She was ready to shoot, but wasn't going to waste an arrow for mindless practice when she knew something was wrong. In the corner of her eye, she saw the ring of stones through the trees. She knew the clan had replaced the fallen stone onto its pillar, and Mor'du's head now made a wonderful conversation starter in the Great Hall - but fear of the great monster had never left her, even past the death of it. When she finally reached the plain, which stood underneath the Crone's Tooth and Firefalls, she slowed Angus to a halt. In the distance, the visage of the moon could be seen clearly and though it wasn't a full moon, she could still make out the silhouettes that blocked the view in front of it.

"They look like birds," She whispered without letting her eyes drop. It was true, they did look like birds, but the appeared far too big

to be any of the creatures she'd come across before and they were all different shapes, and sizes. It was a fantastic sight, but Merida knew it meant trouble, and at that thought, the thunder clapped once again in the distance. "Wha' do you think, Angus?" She called out to the horse below her, leaning forward to play with his ears for a free moment. She glanced back up the birds and narrowed her eyes; she had to go inform her father of this. He could be angry she'd snuck out, but if the clan faced attack, she was sure he'd overlook that small detail. She pulled on the reins and dug in her heels to head home.

2. Chapter 1: Can't Stop

****Chapter I**

>_Can't Stop, I've a Date With Fate_

As the wilderness fell apart from around her, and the glowing lights of her home came into view, several thoughts were spinning wildly around Merida's head. She had little faults about the protection of the castle - it was extremely well guarded, and the walls could not be easily scaled. But in the case of giant birds; she doubted that the comfort of high walls was of little satisfaction to her, or any of the others living within the keep. When she finally reached the gates, she found them closed and frowned in desperation.

"Jings, crivvens." She muttered under her breath, casting her gaze up to the guard looking down upon her. He shifted, changing over the torch in his hands. "Let me through." She commanded him, the last thing she wished to be doing at the moment was wasting time with this fool. "Open the gate, ya gammy bassa!"

"Wha' kind o' language is tha' fer a young lass?" He responded, elbowing another guard who walked past him. However, the princess only picked up her equipped bow from her lap and aimed it expertly at the man. She knew she needn't say anymore, and so did he. Finally, he signalled for the portcullis to be opened, and while waiting for it, Merida replaced the arrow back to the quiver on her side, and pulled the weapon back over her head. This was taking far too long. But eventually, the two men were able to pull themselves together for long enough to open the gate, and as soon as she knew Angus could fit underneath, she pressed him forward into a fast-paced canter to the kitchen door. She now made no attempt to be silent, and charged into the castle, racing upstairs to her parents' chambers while shouting her father's name continuously.

"I was out by the Crone's Tooth, I..." She started, slamming straight into her father's chest. He looked down to her, a frown scarring his face but a sword in his hand. "Dad!" Merida jumped back away from him, startled by his sudden appearance.

"Ya better have a good reason fer wakin' me up." Fergus then passed his sword over to Elinor, who had been stood behind him since they had been awakened. She twisted it in her hands, then moved away and disappeared into the room. Merida's eyes followed her mother's movements until she could no longer see her; then she turned back to Fergus.

"I was out, by the Crone's Tooth-" Her father lifted a hand, interrupting her.

"You were out?!" He bellowed, only Elinor had returned and placed a hand onto her husband's shoulder to calm him; she knew Merida would not wake them for nothing.

"Birds... Giant birds. Way too big to be from 'round here." Her father gave her a look of derision. "And thar was tha sound o' thunder - yet no clouds, or rain. Go check yo'self if you think I'm lyin'." She wasn't to be taken for a fool.

Fergus uttered a grunt of opposition, but stepped away from her and went to the window anyway. She was sure he understood her attitude to not giving up, not until he'd at least checked outside, and that she wasn't so petty as to wake the whole keep in the middle of the night for little reason.

"Wha' ya see?" She called out after him, stepping into the room anxiously, she resisted walking up behind him to look over his shoulder and instead stood perfectly still where she was. Occasionally glancing to her mother who had settled in the rocking chair on the far side of the room, by the fireplace. She too had her eyes to the glass framework of the window, a solicitous and impatient leer within her gaze. "Mum..."

Elinor's scrutiny instantly went to her daughter. She answered her, however, with a small coherent hum, her eyebrows raising slightly, awaiting an answer. But Merida only smiled, she hardly saw her mother when she let her hair flow free behind her. Besides, as a child, all the orange-haired lass had ever wanted to do was play with her hair, she admired it; but despite that, would never give up her own head of fire for it. She was about to open her mouth and speak again, disliking the silence that reigned over them, but her father's voice split between them.

"Birds, ya say?" He asked her, while picking up pieces of clothing, and pulling them onto his body. Merida nodded at him, watching as he grabbed a scabbard for his sword and pulled the belt tight around him before finding the sword and slotting it into place. "Come on, lass." He moved, signalling for her to follow. With one last glimpse, she gave a gracious look and another smile before starting after her father, who had already woken the rest of the castle with his shouting.

She ignored all this, and hastily made her way back outside. Either her father saw too much in her, or she saw too much in herself. But cautiousness and vigilance hurt no-one, 'cept slumber. Though, Merida soon began to regret her decision of waking the keep as soon as she stepped outside and looked upon the weary faces of the DunBroch military. Had her father roused every soldier of the kingdom from their sleep? It damned well seemed like that was the case. She sighed, pushing her way through the crowd to get to Angus, who had already wandered back to his stall. There was a mercenary stood by him, checking his legs - it was easy prey for a man when a horse was ready and saddled, but he moved away instantly when the princess drew near, shooting her a quick wave and bow then dissolving into the crowd. She watched the man until she could no longer see him, and mounted her horse when she was sure he was gone. Her father then appeared, standing at the head of the steps in front of the castle. He spoke to the mob of men before dispersing a number of them into several scouting groups, and while he had, Merida had readied herself

and was patiently waiting atop Angus.

"You're nay goin' out." She heard a heavy voice from behind her. "Leave it tae tha men." She found now that it was her father, as he'd walked forward and taken a hold of her ride's reins while he was speaking.

"Dad!" She cried, refusing to dismount.

"Nay; you're stayin' tha's ma final word." He said no more, then headed to the great hall where the rest of the soldiers were anxiously awaiting edict from their brothers. But parental consent had never deterred her before, and in an event like this, she certainly wasn't waiting around when she could be doing something. No, despite her father's wishes, and how much she usually seemed to respect them, she couldn't bring herself to stand down this time. She'd be damned if she didn't help. With a spur, Angus lurched forward into a fast-paced canter as she headed to the gate before it closed. She was so close that even the black haired beastie had to lower his head to get through safely. Merida quickly pulled up the heavy black hood so that of the scouts on the highland would not recognise her. It was for the best; they'd only take her home.

It was then when she heard the noise once more. The deep, rumbling thunder that had terrified Angus and woken her earlier in the night. However, this time, it sounded constant - fixed. Not like before when it reverberated across the evening sky. Angus skidded to an energetic halt, prancing on the spot. It took all of the princess' strength to hold his steady. Then, once he was calm again, she looked about her. Where precisely had the sound originated from? She didn't notice, the small blue apparition appear underneath her, however, Angus did, and in his agitation, she almost lost her balance.

"Angus!" She cried at him, vemon pouring out of her and into her voice; he never usually acted so chagrined. Though, when he wouldn't still himself, Merida knew she had little choice but to push him onwards, and then she saw them; only after looking up to let her eyes settle on the landscape in front of them. But by then, the horse below her was already charging ahead. "Wisps." She whispered, leaning forward and pressed lower into the saddle - had the wisps not finished with her yet? What more could they possibly throw at her; the bear fiasco had been enough, she couldn't take another event of such a scale. As the wisps then led her over a large hill of the highlands, and to a rock face; they disappeared into the cliffside.

"Wha-" She started to speak, amazed and irritated that they'd pulled her so far from the forest to pointlessly bring her to an empty hollow. She dismounted Angus and walked forward to press her hand against the stone. It was freezing - but she'd expected that.

"Heil." A voice called to her from behind the rocks. Merida instantly jumped back, readying her bow. However, she saw no-one, so backed away from the cliff face so she could take in the sight of the first few metres of the rock.

"Who's thear?" She responded, her eyes whipping around in the darkness, she noticed a slight flickering of colour on the left side, behind a large formation. "Is anyone thear?" She continued speaking,

watching the corner of darkness. Suddenly; movement. Shadows moving, and a large one at that. Now she knew she wasn't going crazy. She took a few steps towards the murkiness before a voice cut her to a halt.

"Hrafnarnir munu hafa Ákik!"

Looking up, all Merida could make out was darkness descending upon her too quickly for her to react with such ferocity. So she dived to her right and out of the harms way. The figure continued to shout, wildly swinging a weapon and marching on her opponent. The princess reached to her side and scrambled for her bow, nocking the arrow onto the string and pulling it tight, all in time to aim it before she was sliced down the middle.

"Who are ye?" She asked the person, who had their hands on the handle of a nasty looking axe, balancing above their head, ready to go into the enemy's gut.

"Ek skil eigi..." Was the reply, but based on the way it was spoken, Merida hardly believed it was the name of the adversary. Narrowing her eyes, she pulled the arrow from the string of her bow, and slowly replaced it back into the quiver. After this, she took her time to stand, as not to startle the stranger. But once she was stood, she made sure to keep her weapon in her hand; she wasn't taking any chances. Fortunately, her actions seemed to have paid off, as the newcomer had backed away from her and dropped her own weapon to her side. It was then that Merida noticed the brilliant reflection of an axe. She'd be honest; it would never be her weapon of choice, but it seemed like it was in the hands of someone who knew how to use it.

"You ain't from 'round here, are ye?" She spoke quietly, finally able to get a decent viewing of the person in front of her: she appeared tall enough, but not much higher than the princess herself, fair hair pulled back and out of her face, heavy clothing mixed with light armour (in the shape of a spiked skirt and shoulder pads) and rough boots. She definitely wasn't from the Kingdom. Merida weighed the situation in her head; she couldn't speak much without confusing the girl. So she chose for the most basic actions in order to communicate. She took her free hand and gestured to herself; "Merida." She spoke, emphasizing each syllable. Then, she shifted her hands to gesture to the stranger. The girl looked at her as if she'd just chopped her own arm off, and Merida repeated the movements.

Finally, she replied. "Astrid."

Merida nodded, smiling. It was a start.

3. Chapter 2: Auroral Tryst

****Chapter II****

>Auroral Tryst

When the sun started to rise, Astrid and Merida were able to convey the most basic conversation to each other. Hands were used a lot, voice was slow and steady and there was unnecessary emphasis on every word. However, Astrid could now speak some basic Gaelic, and Merida

could speak simple Nordic. It was safe to say they were both rather pleased with themselves considering they'd only spent a portion of the night together.

"MÃ-n bogar." Merida spoke, repeating exactly what Astrid had first stated to her. Based on context, and the fact that Astrid was pointing to her bow when she pronounced it, the princess was almost certain it meant something along the lines of 'my bow', or something similar. When she had finished speaking what she had been instructed, her eyes fell upon the orange horizon of dawn. It was time to leave. She stood, picking up her bow from the floor and pulling it over her head to rest on her shoulder. Angus was stood a little way from them, grazing on the peaty meadow and she whistled to catch his attention before turning to face her morning companion. "Far vel. _(Goodybye.)_" She waved to the viking, then mounted her horse as he drew closer. She heard the sound of Astrid's voice bidding them farewell in Gaelic as they'd just set off and Merida turned in the saddle to wave her good-bye.

Of all things she expected, a friendly Viking was the last concept which crossed her mind. Despite the fact she'd almost been killed upon their encounter. She was beginning to grow fond of this girl, even if she'd trying to gut her with an axe - but it was in her nature, how strange it may be. Then a thought; if Astrid was here, surely the rest of her war party was also here. Merida stole a glance at the girl, then pushed her horse to a gallop. She needed to get back to the castle, but, would her father understand it? He was quick-tempered, especially when it came to the kingdom. Knowing his personality was one reason she couldn't talk to him about this; but, did she really know him at all? Besides, the scouting party may have also found leads to the other Vikings. However, Merida had little heed for them, she was only bothered because whatever happened to them, could befall on Astrid, and the newcomer was her only chance of communicating with any other tribes that may follow this one. She knew that Astrid could not die - by any circumstances, and she'd do her best to hide the Nord away from the clan and her father. But, how?

By the time she'd finished contemplating the best course of action for the situation in which she found herself, Castle DunBroch was almost in view, and through the treeline she could detect what looking to be flames. Eyes widening, she spurred on Angus to pass the trees and see if her mind was playing tricks on her from lack of sleep. Pressing onwards, she found that it was the first level of the keep, where the markets, swine and barracks were situated - but it was still a loss. Though, the fire seemed as if it had been concentrated to a particular area. As if the fire was shot onto the area, rather than set alight. Unless the Vikings had some kind of fire-bolt-catapult-thing, then there was little to no explanation for it. She slowed Angus to canter across the stone bridge and found that the portcullis was already open, and the residents of the castle were busy passing buckets of water from the river under the bridge, to quell the flames. The princess immediately stopped to let a pair of men carrying heavy loads, tie them onto each side of Angus using leather belts and string, she then took a smaller bucket to carry while she lead her horse forward to the fire.

"Wha' happened?" She called out to one of the men walking towards her, holding an empty bucket.

"No idea." He looked over at the fire, shifting the bucket from his right hand to his left. "Jus' came ou' a nowhere, like magic." He turned his head back to his redheaded conversationalist for a slight moment, then moved away from her. Merida watched him leave for a spare few seconds, then continued forward, waiting patiently while frantic Scotsmen stole the buckets away from Angus, and took the one from her hands. Magic? They didn't know the start of it.

Merida continued to help the townspeople until the fire was little more than a spark. But, really, magic wasn't such an impossible answer. It was able to turn Elinor into a bear; why couldn't it set fire to a wooden building? She sighed, knowing now that she was sleep deprived - she must have been if she was resorting to magic as a plausible explanation. The witch wouldn't set livelihoods alight, unless she wanted to die, but Merida was almost certain that the witch wasn't handing out a death wish. If she was, then the princess would beat the old hag to death herself with her own broom. After this thought, she started homeward bound to the castle. It had been a long night, and although her mother would probably lock her in her bedroom for sneaking out (again), that sounded just fine to her. At least she could sleep if that was the case. She took her time to retrieve the tack from Angus, and then used a handful of straw to clean his coat somewhat, finally, she'd finished and headed inside.

"Merida!" She heard almost instantaneous to her foot stepping into the kitchen.

"Yes, mother?" She called after her, wandered aimlessly into the great hall to face her mother's wrath.

"Where have ye been?" She questioned, surprisingly calm. Although, the relaxed atmosphere only agitated Merida more; she'd have the ranting first, and then the shouting. Wonderful. "Merida?" Her mother spoke, still soft, when her daughter gave no answer.

"Scoutin'." She answered, leaning against the stone wall to avoid moving closer.

"And what were ye doin'?" Her mother responded without looking up from sifting through the masses of paper on the table before her.

"Nothin', me an' Angus were jus' out, scoutin'." Merida shrugged off the question awkwardly; all she wanted was sleep, and right now it seemed miles away.

"Angus an' I." Elinor corrected, emotionless. Then she stood and moved closer towards her daughter. "Merida, ye don' realise how dangerous 'tis ou' thear." Her voice had a suddenly serious tone, it was intense and piercing and caused the Princess to avert her eyes from her mother. What if she had been killed by Astrid? She wasn't, which was brilliant, but beside the point.

"I'm sorry, mummy." She whispered, lowering her head a little. At this, Elinor took Merida's check in her hand, smiling lightly at her.

"Go; sleep." She dropped her hand from her daughter's cheek and stepped back, letting her go. Merida grinned softly, jumping forward

to embrace her mother tightly. Both girls chuckled for a moment before she released herself, departing to her room, before she was out the room her mother conveyed after her; "But ne'er again - ye understand?" By now she'd started back towards the large wooden table to continue her paperwork.

Merida nodded, then excused herself, running up the castle's interior to her room. That was definitely easier than she'd expected - but her mother was right. She'd under expected the Viking, and if the rest of the tribe was also here, it would be safer if she only ventured out during the day. Heeding her mother's words, she fell into bed, exhausted.

* * *

><p>"Hey, you!" Hiccup turned to see Astrid striding towards him. Toothless looked up too, and bounded towards her, almost taking out Hiccup in the process. "Toothless, here, I have something for you." She spoke, holding out a dead rabbit by the legs. The Night Fury sniffed the creature, obviously sceptical - he usually consumed seafood. "It's good," Astrid continued, and he then took it from her hands by knocking it to the floor. He picked it up in his mouth and flung it a few metres away, then trotted over and did the same again. "Fine - don't eat it." She sighed, turned back to Hiccup. She resisted moving to his arms and instead went for food - she hadn't eaten since the day before, and was starved. Tenderly, she gave him a hasty wave and continued into the camp.<p>

"Where've you been?" Astrid turned to see Snotlout waltzing over to her. Did he still not realise that she wasn't interested him; and, in fact, never was. He leaned against a large boulder a couple of metres from her, and she was glad of the distance he kept.

"Why're you so interested?" She threw back, avoiding eye contact and picking up chunks of meat from various wooden bowls. Snotlout remained silent, but she'd have preferred him to speak. She didn't like the way he was looking at her. She stopped, halfway through her task, to return the glance. "What do you want?" Astrid asked him, having been irritated by his presence since he first conversed with her.

"Nothin'." He answered, continuing to stare.

"Then I'll knock that stupid smile off your face if you keep looking at me." The Viking placed her meat on the table and took a step forward to Snotlout, clenching her hands into fists. Her opponent took this as a sign to give up while he was ahead and scampered away into the depths of the camp. Astrid went back to her food and picked up her wooden plate, however couldn't find the main component of her meal she was searching for; bread. She looked up to the man beside her, grabbing handfuls of meat from the bowls nearest to him. "Bread?" She asked, and he pointed to the left. "Tapadh leat. _(Thank you.)_" She nodded, thanking the man, then moved to pass him. However, he still blocked her path.

"What did you say?" He looked down at her through narrowed eyes. At this, some other men who had been sitting on either the floor, or logs surrounding the great fire, which indicated the center of the camp, stood to see what the commotion was.

"Oh, that, sorry - yeah, I was, just. It's, errm..." Astrid searched her mind for some kind of answer, any answer that she could use. By now a few of the men had made their way over to her. "I was practising, you know, for when I take... Things..." Her breathing was laboured now, and her palms were clammy. 'Things! What kind of answer is that?!' She thought, but luckily Hiccup had been attracted by all of the men suddenly so interested, and he made his way over to Astrid.

"It's fine, guys, I was the one who taught her." He spoke as breezily as he could, taking her by the hand, and as soon as the burly Vikings had accepted Hiccup's lie and gone back to devouring their food, he pulled her away and to Toothless. Within seconds they were in the air, and once they were high enough (and stable), he turned to her. "'Tapadh leat'?" He spoke while emphasizing each word.

"Yeah, okay, are you done now?" Astrid sighed, eluding the looks he gave her.

"Where did you learn that?" He asked her, turning around in the saddle. "What, you didn't think I'd learn at least some Gaelic before we came here?" He placed a hand on her thigh. "Astrid..." Of course he would have learned.

"It doesn't matter, Hiccup. Take me down." She pushed his hand away from her. No, Merida was her discovery. Besides, Toothless would probably take her back to the village if Hiccup wasn't there, and knowing how much he still wanted to impress his father, he'd probably give the dragon the order to capture her. "Hiccup," She captured his full attention as he'd been occupied with observing the new landscape of the Scottish highlands below him. "Take. Me. Down." The Viking repeated her statement. She wouldn't let him find her. She wouldn't...

"A native?" He retorted.

Damn.

"How did yo-" She started to speak, but was cut off by Hiccup.

"You spoke like a Celt; it's different than how it's written in our books." He grinned at her, and she sighed softly, leaning forward to rest her forehead against his chest.

"Don't let them take her." She whispered softly. Merida was far too precious - she was the only chance of preventing an attack.

Hiccup took Astrid's face in his hands and kissed the tip of her nose gingerly; "I won't."

4. Chapter 3: Taming

****Chapter III****

>The Taming of the Shrew

It was noon when Merida awoke, she could tell roughly what time of the day it was by how active the keep was becoming. They were getting ready for market, and the cattle didn't seem to like it. She sat up, having fallen into the bed earlier that day, she'd forgotten to pull

back the bed sheets or even change her clothes. No matter, it was day, wasn't it? No need for unnecessary attire-swapping. She dived onto her bow, able to get her quiver and belt around her waist within seconds. There was little daylight left in the day at this time of year, and despite the murky skies, it was still fairly bright. She made her way down to the kitchens for something to eat and spied a large loaf of freshly made bread. Fortunately, she was able to sneak a rather large portion of it without any of the staff noticing, then rushed outside before they saw her eating it. Angus, however, wasn't so impressed with the food in Merida's hands that he wasn't allowed access to and informed her by issuing a piercing whinny only centimetres from her face.

"Angus!" She cried indignantly. "Ya had yer food this mornin', so ye shouldnae be askin' fer mine." She smiled and rubbed his nose softly while finishing off the last of her bread. Finally finished, she turned to mount and started out into the forest before any of the guards, or her mother, could stop her. But, she was indecisive on the course of action to take. Should she make her way to the same place as before - would she even be able to find it? - where she had met Astrid for the first time? Or to another? And upon thoughtless riding, she found that her horse had taken her to the Ring of Stones. This was where everything had started earlier in the year, and this is where it had ended. But did this mean that something disastrous would happen as it had before. She dismounted, pushing herself from Angus and further into the ring. How long had it been since she'd first stepped foot in here? Far too long for her to remember anyway.

At this, there came the sound of wind, though she felt no breeze. She again wondered if it was magic, as she had when she'd first heard the thunder two days ago. But that explanation soon left her consciousness. It was Scotland; that was the only explanation needed for those kind of weather conditions. Angus called to his owner impatiently, as he usually did when he was anxious or afraid. So the question ran in Merida's mind - what was he so afraid of? She turned to face him in order to detect the cause of his solicitude. Yet before she could even begin to answer her question, she was snatched from the air with two claw paws clenched around her arms. Instinctively; she screamed from fear. However, it wasn't the fact she was in the air (that's she'd never been airborne before is no reason; she'd climbed the Crone's Tooth and her nerves fought nothing then), it was the confusion. How was this even possible? Then, she heard a voice. She could tell it was Astrid, shouting her name, but there was also someone else - a boy speaking fractured Gaelic.

"No fear. I will hurt you not." He spoke, calm and composed - only this further strengthened the turmoil growing inside her. She would not speak, for she found that she could not. It was only until she was placed back on solid ground that she was able to attain her voice once more. She brushed herself off, angry now at the thought of Angus alone. About to unleash Scottish hell on the boy; she pulled the bow from around her shoulders and placed an arrow against the string, aiming at him. But, it was swiftly knocked out of her hands, to the ground, by an dark attacker. Could it be... A relative of Mor'du? Merida turned; facing the monster with a fear she never truly knew she had, and while the colour of the beasts were similar, they were far different than she could have ever imagined. Facing her, now, was something she'd never seen before. Something fiercely offensive that was stalking towards her. It was several things at once, but she was

sure she knew what it was supposed to be.

Whispering, she spoke. "Dragon..."

The reptile hurtled towards the Princess at this, he halted only centimetres from her. Anger pouring from his eyes. The force caused her to fall backwards, and she sat, staring up at the creature in awe. She heard the sound of voices, and the beast was suddenly a kitten. It moved towards her, intrigued as to why her hair wasn't warm in any way - it was clearly fire. Merida looked up to her Viking friend stood on her right, both of them smiling.

She heard the boy talk once more; "Dreki..." She wasn't sure if it meant 'dragon' or something else. At this, Astrid called out into the empty skies. But Merida didn't question - it obviously meant something that only she understood, and the boy that had joined them.

She faced him, "Who are ye, anyway?" She pressed into him, though she already knew he wasn't a threat.

The boy responded almost instantly, he offered his hand while he stood, beaming at her. "I am Hiccup." He replied. She took his hand hesitantly, and ended up shaking it once she was stood. She then noticed his gaze averted from her, to the right of them. She did the same and noticed another beast had joined them; it noisily announced its arrival, Astrid by its side, her hand patting the side of the creature. It seemed completely different to the cat-like black dragon, yet the same. They shared many qualities as well as being individual in their own rights.

"Wha' they call'd?" She asked Hiccup, who had moved to his own dragon.

The Viking smiled and pointed to his black-scaled companion; "Tç«nnfÃ|ra." He spoke slowly and steadily while Merida watched the movements of his lips. She was still confused though, so he continued repeating the name until she was able to say it correctly. Eventually, she was able to say the name close enough for both Vikings to understand she was speaking about the dragon, so they wasted no more time, and Astrid pulled Merida's attention from her winged interest, and spoke while pointing to the blue beast beside her.

"HrÃ-Ã°flÃ°ga." Merida looked on with attentiveness. How was it that dragons were things of legend; and yet their clan had never seen even a trace of them in centuries? But, out of all the books she'd read, and sketches she'd found, there was little resemblance to the monsters of their stories to the ones stood in front of her. Nothing she'd read about them was true - so, why had it been written? Lies for status, money, women, power, respect, maybe even fear. What if everything she knew about her society was all lies, the foundations of which she lived was born from nothing but a dead man's fairytale? She pulled herself from her nightmare and back to reality, if it was reality, and turned to Astrid, facing her.

"Can I ride it?" She asked confidently, if legends were no longer lessons, but lies. Then she was determined to prove them wrong with every bone in her body. However, Astrid responded with a faint shake of her head, replying sharply.

"TÇ«nnfÃ|ra. Sik rÃ-Ã°a." The Viking patted her dragon's neck, all the while staring at the opposite her. She didn't understand; why couldn't she ride this dragon - what was so special about the black one?

"Ride TÇ«nnfÃ|ra, safe he will keep you." It was Hiccup who had spoken now, but his words only further angered her.

"Why cann'ai ride 'er?" She took a few steps to the boy, who retreated in defence. His companion, however, wasn't so scared and Merida was sure he was have tried to pin her again if it wasn't for the soothing tones in Hiccup's voice.

"Ride her, then. But - I warned you." The boy mounted his beast, who immediately rose into the air, and she smiled lightly. These Vikings weren't so tough after all. She turned and sprinted to Astrid, who was sat upon the creature already, and grabbed her hand as she was offered it. Originally, the Princess had her hands on her thighs, but after a not so smooth start, she threw them around Astrid's waist in fear. So maybe it was going to be a little scarier than she first thought.

When she heard the female in front of her start to laugh, and the feeling of humiliation instantly sparked inside her. Was the girl laughing at her misfortune? However, as Merida's eyes skirted from Astrid's shoulder - to the view of Hiccup to their right, all her assumptions were negated. Both Vikings were grinning harmlessly - yes, it was at her actions, but she guessed it was meant in good sport.

"I told you!" Hiccup smirked towards her, and Merida pulled a face at the motion. She had a feeling she wasn't going to start enjoying this particular Viking's company; but if was Astrid's friend, then she'd do her best to be civil to him, at the very least.

5. Insertion: Lonely Girl & Review Replies

Insertion

>Broken Shoes, Torn Up Fabric and the Story of a Lonely Girl.

It had been several hours, and Merida had finally been dropped back at the circle of stones, but found that Angus had already left. She didn't blame him. However, it did mean that she had the long, tiring journey of walking back to DunBroch alone. But she made it, just in time to watch as the sun fell over the highland hills while she opened the doors into the Great Hall.

"Yer late." A voice spoke the moment she stepped in.

"Ah'm not." She responded, already having recognised the voice as her fathers.

"Ya are." At this, Merida sighed, she had time to kill, but preferably not like this.

"Dad," She started towards the stone staircase leading up to the first story of the castle. "Jus' le' me go find Mum." Then, she left

before another word could be spoken. For a moment, she was afraid her father would start after her as he sometimes did, but when she heard silence (rather than the sound of wood against stone) she continued on her way upstairs. She half expected Fergus to shout disciplines at her as she thought she was free of it - but was a little surprised to find it didn't happen. However, it did mean that her mother would have the pleasure of punishing her today. After this, she immediately made her way to her bed chambers, exhausted by the walk home. It was hard enough walking around DunBroch with a dress like this on, but add in some extra weight from mud and dampness, and also to fact that she was walking through an uneven forest and you had a recipe for tired princesses. She looked up and to the door at hearing a creaking; it was Elinor.

"I'm no' late." She spoke immediately, already bracing for a telling off.

"I ne'er said ye were." Her mother answered calmly, "Och, Merida! Look a' yer dress!" Elinor moved swiftly over to the bed, picking up the torn ends of the dress. Both of them remembered the last time she'd returned home in a state like this.

"No, mum; don' fuss. Angus ran â€" I had te walk back." She smiled to her mother, watching the tension leave her face. There was no way she was telling what really happened, and even if she did, she doubted that Elinor would believe a word of it. Except from the part about the brutal warriors hiding out in the highlands. Oh God, the Vikings. How long had they been here? A few days at least, and even that was a stretch for them. They were bound to attack soon, and DunBroch would be unprepared. Tomorrow. She'd talk to Astrid and Hiccup tomorrow. They'd sort something out. They'd better.

* * *

><p>Responses to Reviews

** WordSmyth**

>Ah, thanks! I'd actually been searching for a few minutes, but gave up because I couldn't find it. xD<p>

** Alsarnia**

>I'm glad you understand. Hopefully I should be getting the next full chapter up within the next 23 weeks, it's been ages - I'm so sorry! I've just been given a lot of essays to write recently and felt that it's best I get them out of the way before I continue with Eventide.
:p

** Moneyman**

>Thank you, I'm hoping to add in some more HTTYD characters in the next chapter or two - but I won't reveal much more than that.
:3<p>

** Ill Lasanga/Vehement Snail**

>I replied to your reviews a little while back, but it still makes me happy when I see them. ^^<p>

6. Chapter 4: Discoveries

Chapter IV

>Discoveries<p>

Clack. "Merida?" Clack. Soft whispers. Clack. "Afsaka!_ (Excuse me!*)_"

Merida awoke with the short, sharp sounds of clicks nearby. The noises were periodic, but not rhythmic and irritated her immensely. She sat up and squinted in the darkness, her fire had gone out and she didn't have a tinderbox in her room to light the candle on her bedside drawers. Sighing, she pulled herself up out of comfort and ventured towards the sound, letting it lead her to the window, though she couldn't see anything past the frosted glass.

"Ert Ã¼ bÃ°in? _(Are you ready?)" She knew instantly who it was and a smile came across her face, though she dared not speak out for fear of awaking others in the keep, but how could she escape and spend the night with them? Her parents would certainly find out, but that was when the gate had to be opened for her to leave. Without a second thought, she changed her clothes as quickly as she could and picked up her usual weapon, along with ammunition. The tough part was getting out, though. Her bedroom door was cumbersome, it took a great heave in order to pull it back â€" and even then it was nothing short of cacophonous. Then she had to make her way down to the kitchen: if she kept her shoes on they would make noises against the stone; but if she took them off her feet would get cold. The kitchen door was loud too, but she'd been able to prevent it smashing against the wall last time she'd sneaked out, so there was little to worry about there. Then, there was attracting the Viking's attention without using fire (DunBroch guards would spot the light) or too much noise.

However, by the time that Merida was able to open her bedroom door â€" and shut it again â€" she'd realised a more promising plan. By air, the roof of the keep was far easier to get to than the ground beside it, and so, her destination switched and she started to the wooden steps that would lead to the roof. Although, the fire torches that lit the castle were out and so she had to keep her hands running along the freezing wall until she met a crossing â€" she knew the way, that wasn't a problem â€" but the noise of her shoes against the stone were noisy, and echoed down the hall like a never-ending roar (she'd had to resort to wearing them when they made too much noise against the wall, as she held them in her hands, whenever she tripped; which happened often). Though finally, she made it, and without waking up her family or attendants either. Cautiously, the princess pushed the trap door open, rushing to catch it as it started to fall â€" she was far too slow, but noticed that the slab of wood was the same.

"Hei! _(Hey!)" Merida looked up to see Astrid shining above her, hand outstretched "Hversu ferr? _(How are you?)"

She searched her mind for the answer â€" she recognised the question and had been taught the various responses by her Viking friend â€" while getting up from the castle and shutting the trap behind her.

Eventually, she answered; "Allt fÃ°nt, Ã¼akka...? _(Fine, thanks...?)" She ended the phrase with a rising intonation, then was met with a look of disapproval. She repeated the phrase coolly and more confidently, though still slowly. A smile grew on Astrid's face,

and Merida grinned with her, not noticing how the girl had advanced upon her. Without warning, a pair of arms were around her neck " at first, she thought, that she may have been tricked, but judging by how light her friend's touches were against her, she thought against it. Unable to stop smiling, she placed her own arms around Astrid's waist and onto her back as they embraced. It seemed far too long to be embracing for; but Merida wasn't about to stop it. It was a strange sensation, but a wonderful one " she'd only ever been taken in arms by her mother before. While Astrid detached herself, the Celt found herself lingering close to the Viking until she was nestled behind her astride Hrǫflǫga (she still had no intention to ride the boy's panther-like dragon, they both seemed far to ecstatic).

"Bǫin? _(Ready?)" She heard her companion call to her, but Merida only gripped Astrid's waist a little tighter and waited to be off. Yet, she heard nothing, and when she opened her eyes she saw that they hadn't moved. The Viking had half turned her body in the saddle and was looking to her. "Merida?" She glanced up instantly, searching Astrid's eyes for answers.

"Vel? _(Well?)" She spoke softly, her little knowledge of Nordic affecting her answer greatly.

Astrid muttered a second, bringing her hand to rest against the back of the beast to Merida's far left, then leaned down to press her lips against the Scots forehead. Instantly, Merida's thoughts went to her family and home, then slowly came to Astrid. The way she was being stared at was starting to make her feel a little uneasy.

"Astridâ€|" She uttered, as if to say something else, but nothing could come out. It would be pointless anyway as she wouldn't understand " and at this remembrance, and annoyance and frustration struck her. How was it fair that the first friend she was able to have (besides her mother, of course) couldn't understand her, and was probably going to be a part of a war party that would kill her within the next few days. God-damned destiny. She scoured her mind for something to say, anything to bloody say. "Ǻkakka fyrir. _(Thank you.)_" She whispered, her eyes fixed on the leathery scales below her. She felt a junction against her chin, and as it pulled her upwards she found it was Astrid's curled finger. "â€| T'anks." She breathed, unable to turn away from the girl. Was this how it was supposed to be with friends " '_Oh dear God; please don't let this end._'

Though, it had to, and Astrid turned away from her to push her dragon up and onwards. Merida held against Astrid once more, complacent but benignly irritated. Why did this feel so natural, yet so corrupt at the same time? Though, those two emotions fell hand in hand. Like slavery, murder and collecting spoils of war. Her father had done such things " so why couldn't she enjoy herself, too?

* * *

><p>NA:** Yes, I know this is a bit short - sorry. ;_;

>Expect a longer chapter for #5. ^^<p>

And for those of you who haven't realised - there is a reason I haven't provided translations till now.

>(But when the story is finished I may add a full glossary at the end.)<p>

They're only ever saying common phrases that you'd hear in everyday conversation, but I wanted you, the readers, you feel like Merida/Astrid (or Hiccup) does in the story when they can't understand what the other is saying.

*_(Infrm.) Would be used in the sense that friends would together, like; "Hey, you!" or "Hey guys!"._

End
file.